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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0641  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1918  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000874

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [PINR](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELA'S NEW LABOR MINISTER A LOYAL PROFESSIONAL

REF: CARACAS 00532

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Classified By: Mark Wells, Acting Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(b).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) In a rare departure for Venezuelan ministerial appointments, new Labor Minister Ricardo Dorado is a qualified and experienced expert in his field. Dorado most recently served as Vice Minister of Labor, often representing Venezuela at International Labor Organization (ILO) meetings. Though a labor expert, Dorado also worked for the Chavez-leaning human rights NGO PROVEA prior to joining the Ministry of Labor. Dorado, who once studied to be a Jesuit priest, has a leftist Catholic take on politics, according to one former employer. Despite his grounding in the traditional left, Dorado seems to be a Chavez loyalist who can be expected to keep organized labor divided and submissive to the government's wishes. End summary.

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New Minister Has Professional Credentials  
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¶2. (C) President Hugo Chavez appointed Ricardo Dorado as Minister of Labor on February 24. Dorado replaced outgoing Minister Maria Cristina Iglesias, who was named Minister of Light Industry. Iglesias, a member of the Patria Para Todos (PPT) party, did not have a labor background. Dorado, who had worked in key positions within the Labor Ministry since 2002, was often noted by labor leaders as a specialist, providing much of the day-to-day management of the Ministry. Before being appointed, Dorado was the Vice Minister of Labor and often served as the acting minister in Iglesias' absence. He also served as the Director General for Labor Affairs in ¶2002.

¶3. (C) According to labor analyst Rolando Diaz, for whom the new Minister once worked, Dorado is a lawyer who completed specialty studies in labor law. He is a graduate of Andres Bello Catholic University (UCAB), a Jesuit-run university in Caracas. Diaz said Dorado had, in fact, trained to be a Jesuit priest, but ultimately chose the legal field. Diaz said Dorado has always been a radical leftist, associated with Catholic lay movements. Dorado has been a PPT party sympathizer, but not a member, asserted Diaz. (Note: Diaz said Dorado, approximately 40, is married with one child, and probably does not speak English.)

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And Some Revolutionary Bona Fides  
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¶4. (C) Prior to joining the government in 2002, Dorado worked for the human rights NGO PROVEA (Venezuelan Education and Action Program), an organization often sympathetic to Chavez.

One Internet reference indicated that, during the coup attempt of April 2002, Dorado, acting with the support of PROVEA, filed a request for protective measures on behalf of the sequestered President Chavez before the Inte-American Commission for Human Rights. Though this action no doubt endeared Dorado to the Chavista camp, Diaz asserted that Dorado probably does not share Chavez' convoluted ideas about organized labor. Dorado had always been a radical proponent of independent labor movements, Diaz said, diametrically opposed to the government subservience that Chavez promotes. Diaz speculated that the new Labor Minister was working for the Bolivarians out of personal interests rather than personal conscience. In any event, Dorado has in public statements consistently toed the Chavista line.

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ILO Expertise Will Be Noticeable  
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¶5. (C) Diaz said that Dorado was the Venezuelan Government's most qualified labor expert. Dorado has often handled the ILO account, representing Venezuela at key meetings in Geneva. Diaz recalled that Dorado used to give classes to members of the Venezuelan Workers Confederation (CTV) on how to present complaints to the ILO. Diaz said that, in contrast with other Bolivarian ministers, Dorado "will not be an embarrassment" in international fora.

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Comment  
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¶6. (C) Labor leaders will respect Dorado as an expert, but they do not look forward to any major advances in the labor field. Chavez feels threatened by organized labor, even among his own followers, and has pioneered a policy of dismantling the sector, with Dorado's help, since at least ¶2002. The appointment of a qualified expert to a ministerial position is rare for Chavez, who prefers loyalists to technocrats. Dorado is probably the exception that proves the rule, however. We do not expect Chavez to start putting a priority on brain power in his senior government nominations.

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